

BANTHA TRACKS

JOURNAL OF THE OFFICIAL STAR WARS FAN CLUB

INTERVIEW:

Can you give us a brief history of Ralph McQuarrie, highlighting your early days with George Lucas on STAR WARS?

I took an interest in drawing literally from the age of six. I drew mostly to further whatever projects I was doing, especially my model planes. Because my mother drew and my grandfather painted, I grew up thinking that art was just something one sat down and did. I was never put in awe of art, and that proved to be a very good introduction.

I grew interested in fantasy right from the start. By high school I had mastered drawing anything I saw. I would take a photograph of anything that would stand still long enough and draw it. I readily understood the process of putting in the vanishing point where I wanted and placing my current conception in space relative to that point and to a particular light source, while including all the elements necessary to make a visual image that was both interesting and easily understood. I began making some of the faces I drew grotesque to see what I could do with normal things by taking them a little bit further. Then I realized I could do more—I could draw something totally from my imagination and make it any way I

wanted. That grabbed me. Now I just love to doodle and let the pen go wherever it wants. It fascinates me to let my subconscious direct my drawing and just watch something develop I haven't ever seen.


Things that fly have always fascinated me also, because like all machines, airplanes are something man conceived of, built, and controls. You can change a machine more easily than you can change a tree. Oh, you can do subtle things to a tree—clipping the roots and so on—but it remains essentially the same. A machine is more pliable in your hands. It can be made to look as you wish and to perform different tasks.

Ralph McQuarrie

Soft-spoken, tall, white-haired Ralph McQuarrie has contributed his own brand of conceptual and design genius to almost every facet of the STAR WARS Saga. He is respected and loved by everyone

working at Lucasfilm Ltd. At a recent building dedication where Ralph spoke to the company, he mentioned how lucky he felt having worked for Lucasfilm and recalled that he had been here awhile. Ralph said he thought he was the second or possibly the third employee ever hired by George. George Law stood up in the audience and said, "The first."





I learned how airplanes were built while I was a technical illustrator at Boeing in the early 60's by drawing their parts catalogs and illustrating how the 747 should be assembled. I enjoyed the work but got tired of the overtime. I had been doing some advertising illustration, off and on, with a few book covers and story illustrating. I felt that my painting and my whole sense of design were noticeably weaker than my technical abilities. I have always felt my technical abilities were stronger than my design talents.

I was very happy to have contributed to the Apollo missions. I worked on paintings used in the animated films to show the rocket streaking through the sky with flames jetting out, the stages and boosters dropping, altitude changes, and coverage behind the moon where TV transmission was blocked. Part of our film was simulation of a model rocket photographed against a background showing the rocket's blast. This job, doing simple NASA animated simulations, eventually led me to a job in feature films.

It was an accident that I ever got in contact with filmmakers and people who do film effects and titles. I was working at the Charles Eabbs Studios when I became intrigued by movies as a series of sequential pictures, scenes with dissolves, and the what-have-you that you can do on film. Here I became familiar with the language of filmmaking. I had done quite a few posters for feature films and met two aspiring writers who knew George Lucas and was introduced. I showed George some slides of a project I'd done for an opening sequence featuring a robot announcer all made of glass standing in front of a wonderful machine that generated a life-sized hologram. The robot told the audience what was coming up, then the camera tracked in close on the hologram as it became the opening shot of the show. It was good stuff and I think it impressed George enough to remember me when he was preparing to present Twentieth Century Fox with a very interesting project—STAR WARS.

Ralph McQuarrie at the Lucasfilm Ltd. Sound Stage dedication



The scope of STAR WARS was so vast and so visual no script could convey it all. George felt he could use a few of my paintings to convince the people at Fox his movie idea would be interesting. They listened to George's presentation and looked at my four or five paintings and were convinced enough to give him enough money to finish the script and do some more paintings. George worked on the script and went to England to research a tentative budget while I did five more paintings. Twentieth Century Fox, chiefly Alan Ladd Jr., decided on the strength of our further work and a deal was made to go ahead with STAR WARS. I felt STAR WARS was George's project and I was there to help him get it done, so I had to become a filmmaker's helper.



I haven't always enjoyed working with the lesser filmmakers. I always found myself putting all this effort into a project I really didn't like. Working directly with people rather than going from their written work can be a problem. They may have some good ideas but if I am cluttered up with a lot of input it won't work. I design best when given just a little bit to work from. I liked George's ideas for STAR WARS very much. George's first script was quite thorough and contained a lot of key elements. George won't swamp you with tons of ideas and pep talks then hang over your shoulder and get anxious. He is very sparing with what he gives you and relies upon your being an artist and just lets you do it. I appreciate that. I thought everything I did for it worked out just fine. I was really behind the whole project—something that hasn't always been true. I want anything I do in the future to be something I can really get behind—like STAR WARS.

By now Fox had backed STAR WARS and I had finished most of what I was hired to do. Industrial Light & Magic was just getting under way. John Dykstra had already hired Joe Johnston to do design work. George asked me to stay on and do matte paintings. Lucasfilm was going to hire the production designer and the set designer and the costume designer and all of these people were going to take what George and I had done to convince Fox and use that as a base for the designs of STAR WARS. I didn't think they were going to keep so much of what I did.

I know it's very hard for me to get past the first one or two ideas I had when I see them all finished. I might have fallen maybe a little bit in love with them. I might feel this concept can be rendered a lot more effectively, but gee, I really do like what I have. I have a feeling I get my best ideas first. Sometimes I go back and look at those first STAR WARS paintings. They look a lot better on the scale they were done without the washing out reproduction gave them, and on the whole I feel pretty good about the work I did for STAR WARS. Certainly the work I did on STAR WARS is the best of all the paintings I have done. I can say I am an artist whose work has been widely seen and enjoyed. To me that means I have achieved my goal.

"I have a feeling I get my best ideas first."

We didn't know STAR WARS was going to be that big a film and make tons and tons of money and get everyone excited. The paintings I had done to convince the higher-ups at Fox were intended to present the visual scope of STAR WARS, not to be published. George and I were just going to make some slides to show people and keep them on file. THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK was different. Everyone was waiting for the next movie to see what we would come up with. I felt my contributions for EMPIRE weren't as fresh, but I had pretty well covered George's project anyway.

How much have you done on pre-production for Revenge of the Jedi?

I got excited when I read the script for REVENGE OF THE JEDI—there are certain things in it I really like a lot—but by the time pre-production started, I had sort of lost my momentum on designing. I was getting a little frustrated, in a way, doing nothing but unfinished design sketches. Nilo Rodis-Jamero and Joe Johnston are designing some great stuff. I am doing less of the conceptual design for REVENGE OF THE JEDI and am concentrating on finished paintings for the portfolio. It's just fun for me to do finished art. I'll take parts out of the storyboards and the photographs of the monsters and make up good compositions and paint them carefully. I've already completed six paintings showing key points of the plot, and I will return to do the rest. I'm taking a break right now. I need some time to get out and take some walks and read some books and just sit around doing nothing for awhile.



Yoda pre-production paintings and preliminary sketches



Berry Costner

You mentioned matte paintings. Exactly what is a matte painting?

A matte could be called a stencil or mask. Most people know about stencils where you paint through the holes and the stencil keeps the paint off the rest of the picture. That is essentially what a matte does—it keeps the light from striking the area of film you don't want exposed while allowing light to fall where you want it. If we have a scene painted on glass of the Death Star or a planet floating in black space, we will have to paint a matte to keep the stars from shining through the double exposure when we add the starfield. Imagine a piece of cardboard held in front of your face. The part of the room behind the cardboard has been masked or "matted out" by the cardboard. If we replace your eye with a camera, we would make a stencil out of cardboard that would let our camera record the model of the Cloud City we want filmed, but would block out the wall, our cameraman, and everything else.

Now if we use our stencil to generate a second matte, a reverse of the first with holes where the first had stencil, we can film an appropriate background, a cloudscape, to finish that frame. During the optical printing of our film, where these filmed elements are combined into a master copy, the separate elements of model and background are exposed, one at a time, onto a composite frame. If we are careful and don't let any of these exposures overlap, we will have a beautiful picture of Bespin sitting in a field of clouds without any sign of the wall or the cameraman. With enough mattes and the proper sequencing of each matte and each exposure we can combine any number of elements in a single frame.

When I started in matte painting, I looked at examples that ranged from the very photographic to the painterly and splashy. I came to the conclusion that you could get away with a lot in a matte painting. Some I saw were surprisingly painterly, there was no way you could ever consider them photographs. Both styles can capture the general effect, and if you have that then your matte painting is going to work, but there is a subtle flavor to the photographic style that better captures what the camera sees. The basis of a good matte painting is doing one that stands as a photograph. There is a little mystery as to what the film does to an image. Film does sort of soften an image. You can paint too tightly. I have spent a lot of time on some paintings trying to get a particular effect when I could have gotten the general effect in a third of the time.

In looking at a photograph you have to divine just exactly what is there. Some things might fall into silhouette, yet you know intellectually that there are details. You might think you should put in those details to make your painting more realistic—don't. Photography reduces images to silhouettes and drops out details in shadows and other unobvious stuff like that.



How do you go about doing a painting for a portfolio?

My paintings usually start as a series of pencil studies done along the lines of some scene George and I have discussed and decided would look nice in whatever collection of paintings we are doing.

If the initial idea was good I'll take one of those small pencil studies and use my opaque projector to enlarge it. Or I'll just start right from scratch again including a few other ideas to improve the original sketch, then draw it in full size on onionskin. I'll tape off a piece of illustration board and give it a color undercoat somewhere between the range of colors I plan in the finished work. Sometimes I do a tiny thumbnail sketch, say 1" by 3", to establish the color a bit more in my mind. Then I trace that pencil drawing from the onionskin onto the illustration board, using chalk if I have a dark

"I see art as communicating a fantasy in two or even three dimensions."



Ralph McQuarrie design for sequel to "The Legend of Boggy Creek"

background, and block out the lines of objects that will go in the painting. Usually I will paint a background right under the foreground objects if they are few and small. Then I will trace in the stuff in the middle ground and paint those in, avoiding areas under foreground objects. Then I use my tracing paper and trace in the foreground and paint that in.

Now it's just a matter of continuing to work on the images in the foreground and background and make them all balance. I'll use an airbrush to darken whole areas and to get the glows around lights and highlights. I use cel vinyl for most of the preliminary work and switch to designer gouache for the little details and finishing touches.

I work with a 25"-wide canvas—that's fairly small—but I feel I can work faster and get more painting done because I am less concerned with the details on a figure that's 3" high than I would be if it were 6" high. There is just more to do in the larger space and I don't want to be trapped in doing more work on a belt buckle if I can get the general impression at a smaller size. For production paintings this works well, but for a published piece I like to work bigger, about half again as large as the finished piece. That's because when a painting is reduced down to finished size, the reduction will drop out all the little details and all the tiny brush strokes, leaving the painting markedly more photographic looking. When I do something really big a lot of the work I put into the paintings drops out of the print and can't be noticed.

"That's what I would like to do, see a dream and have it realized."



I guess I'm a perfectionist. I still want to redo my matte painting of Beshin. I felt it needed more research and a better cloud background. I did a Cloud City painting for STAR WARS, quite grey, and discovered the basic question of city design—how many forms can a building take? You can have basic octagonal—which always looks cylindrical with facets, cylindrical, or sweeping freeforms. All of which are used widely in this country. What are you going to do? You can use a cylinder with a round top which is certainly different, but not that different. Beshin has towers and shapes that contrast with the general round form of the city. That gives you a sense of heights when the pod cars zoom by the window. I would have liked to make Beshin so different you would have had no references at all. Maybe a bunch of low shacks or a general lonely feeling, but you would have been lost until you found out it was a city I would have liked to see them film Beshin as a model in front of a background painting. I might even have been able to build the model myself.

What are your immediate goals in art?

I see art as communicating a fantasy in two or even three dimensions. I see an unexpressed mystical knowledge within me that I feel I can make known. I would like to bring a richer color scheme into my art. My paintings tend to be a little on the grey side. I like grey, I like subtle things, so that when you get close to them you see little color patches burning like embers under the grey. I think developing that scheme will involve using oil paints. Right now I work with opaque colors and they dry very quickly. You wind up with a wash which is a little bland somehow, unless you have the courage to apply tremendous color, charge the painting with color, then control the effect so it doesn't get away from you. I will rarely be fond of a watercolor with the water flowing because I always spot the accidents and while some of them are very nice, the whole thing isn't controlled. I prefer to have everything convincing and real, with enough space all around everything and the air real enough that you can feel it. Yet it's a fantasy—something you have never seen before. That's what I would like to do, see a dream and then have it realized.

I very frequently get my best ideas first when what's fresh just pops into my mind. I don't know if that's good or bad. I let things come up from my feelings rather than tool them out. Maybe if I were more methodical I could get better results by taking possibilities A, B, C, and D, and putting the first one together, then the next and seeing what each is like. Once I have all of the possibilities assembled I can ask which of these is the best or is something new coming out of all those combinations?

When I design something, I use the memories in my mental files, recombining those possibilities in various ways to produce the designs. I have all those references in my deep subconscious, a benefit of being an older person. This process doesn't avoid the work, it just allows your mind, a very brilliant piece of equipment, to send a question back into the files and get an almost instantaneous answer. All the memories that fit even loosely are juggled together, organized to a certain extent, and ready to go for a practical purpose.

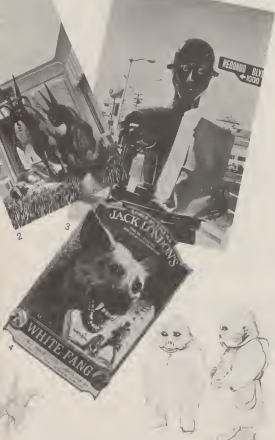
The average eight-year-old that has watched television and movies since he was five is pretty well equipped for this. He has watched almost everything from the African grasslands, to all the animals and bugs, and worms, to all the painters, to all the styles of buildings and even buildings under construction. What is there he hasn't seen? By eight he has built up a pretty good backlog of what exists and that's the stuff he is going to use to design any new stuff.

If you are born into a world where there was nothing but black and white, then you really don't see anything, and you aren't going to come up with anything new, because you don't have anything old to refer to. It's all going to be blank. If you started with one straight line you might possibly conceive of it as being bent or curved or fat, but if you had seen nothing then you don't have anything to interrelate.

I suppose my current goal, other than involving a richer color scheme, is to produce some paintings that might hang in museums. Now that so much of what I have done has been seen and appreciated, I could never leave totally, but I am going to branch out and do other projects. I only hope I can find other projects that I can enjoy being a part of as much as I have George's. Ken Rowland



Ben Lakin



1 Pre-production painting for proposed film "Star Dancing." 2 Ralph McQuarrie Ballantine book cover for Jack Chalker's "Web of the Chosen" 3 Book cover for "The Best of Jack Williamson" 4 Film poster

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BANTHA TRACKS Logo designed
by Ralph McQuarrie



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NEWSLETTER BACK ISSUES

- Special Compilation Issue—Price:** \$2.50 ea. (plus postage and handling)
Includes highlights from issues #1 through #4, originally published in 1978. Complete in one issue, the compilation contains biographical sketches of George Lucas and Gary Kurtz, articles on STAR WARS special effects, an interview with Mark Hamill, a STAR WARS trivia quiz, fan club questions and answers, and more.
- Bantha Tracks Back Issues—Price:** \$1.00 ea. (plus postage and handling)
- #5 Interview with THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK Director Irvin Kershner. Fan Club Cartoon Contest winners. STAR WARS comic strip news, and introduction of Boba Fett.
 - #6 Interview with Harrison Ford, Japanese influences in STAR WARS, questions and answers.
 - #7 Interview with Anthony Daniels, introduction of Lando Calrissian, questions and answers.
 - #8 Interview with George Lucas, preview page of EMPIRE photographs, transcriptions of actors' phone messages.
 - #9 EMPIRE Preview in Washington D.C. Hollywood opening of EMPIRE, animating the Tauntaun, fan club member John Rios profile.
 - #10 EMPIRE International report, STAR WARS costuming, profile of member costumers, "Thank You" Mark Hamill.
 - #11 Announcement of REVENGE OF THE JEDI, STAR WARS Radio Show, interview with JEDI Producer Howard Kazanjian.
 - #12 RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK preview-interview with Director Steven Spielberg, Recruiting Contest Winners, Profile: Members Artwork, JEDI update.
 - #13 REVENGE OF THE JEDI Pre-Production Part I: Co-producers Jim Bloom and Robert Watts, Selecting a Director—Richard Marquand, NASA Strikes Back, Time Capsule, Profile: Kumi—Japanese Cartoonist.
 - #14 REVENGE OF THE JEDI Pre-Production Part II: Joe Johnston—Storyboarding, Creativity Contest Winners, Profile: The Los Angeles Filmmakers & STAR WARS Filksongs.
 - #15 RALPH MCQUARRIE Interview, JEDI Pre-Production Part III, JEDI Press Release, Profile.

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Price: \$4.00 postpaid.

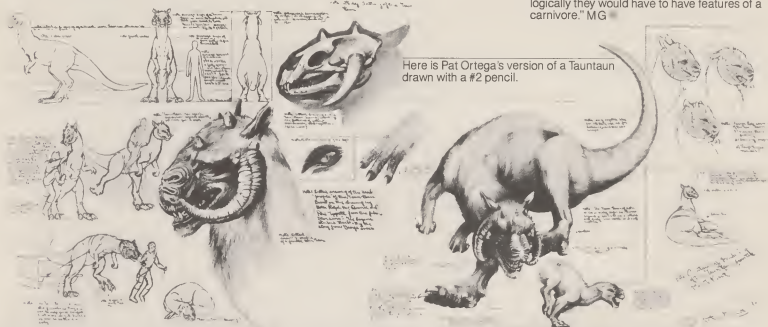
PROFILE

Pat Ortega

Twenty-five year old Pat Ortega has been drawing since she was three. Pat is known for her ability to create believable alien creatures complete with their own anatomy and physiology.

Recently at a science fiction convention, Pat and I were talking about the STAR WARS Saga. I asked Pat how she perceived the Tauntaun.

Pat replied, "The way I see it, the Tauntaun is a combination of a reptile and a mammal. It is a very complex kind of creature with a reptile-like head but with features like a lamb or llama. Its very small arms remind me of a Tyrannosaurus Rex, its legs and tail remind me of a kangaroo. They are warm-blooded and give birth to their young like mammals. They must be meateaters since there is almost no vegetation on Hoth, so logically they would have to have features of a carnivore." MG



Here is Pat Ortega's version of a Tauntaun drawn with a #2 pencil.

STAR WARS Every Day

The STAR WARS comic strip continues... the team of Archie Goodwin, writer, and Al Williamson, artist, have been creators of the strip since February 1981. Once a mainstay of the funny pages, the continuing action comic strip has become increasingly rare in recent years.

The stories take place in the time period between the events of STAR WARS and THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, and each of the 8-week segments leads our characters into surprising and exotic new adventures. Both Al and Archie have mentioned how much fun doing STAR WARS is for them, especially since a daily strip requires a very disciplined kind of writing (Archie likens it to creating a crossword puzzle). For example, some papers carry only the Sunday strip and some only the weekdays—so each Sunday has to summarize the week before as well as present some new developments (which then must be included in the Monday page). Fortunately, many papers carry the strip all seven days.

The Goodwin & Williamson team has worked together before, on King Features' Secret Agent Corrigan. Al, who has been drawing science fiction for many years, won the Cartoonist Society award for his work on the Flash Gordon strip, and Archie, currently Editorial Director of Marvel's Epic Illustrated Magazine, has also written for the Star Hawks and Tarzan strips. We are delighted that they treat us to a little bit of STAR WARS every day (or every Sunday as the case may be). We hope that your local paper is carrying the strip so that you can share these new adventures of the STAR WARS characters. AG

"RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK: THE MOVIE ON RECORD"



Feel the excitement all over again... this time in your own livingroom! "Raiders of the Lost Ark" is now available on a Columbia Records LP that comes with a full-color, 16-page booklet of photos and a fold-out cover printed with the text of the story.

The idea to do this album as an audiodrama without narration came from Ben Burt, designer of the special sound effects for "Star Wars," "The Empire Strikes Back," and "Raiders of the Lost Ark." Created from the original dialogue, sound effects and music tapes, the LP was engineered on computerized mixing equipment.

What makes this story album unique is the chance to reexperience the sensations—through sounds—of the movie's visual scenes. In your imagination, you can see the boulder hurtle towards you, as Indiana Jones races through the tunnel. From beginning to end, when the Ark of the Covenant is opened, the excitement never stops, while the album brings the movie back to mind.

By Archie Goodwin and Al Williamson





1982 is going to be a very exciting year. We hope you decide to stay with us through our first-hand coverage of REVENGE OF THE JEDI. Remember, when you renew, you'll receive four more issues of BANTHA TRACKS, all the fan club benefits and THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK Summer '81 Re-release One-Sheet.

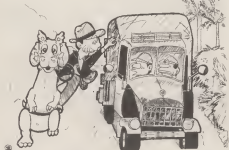
This beautiful color poster, featuring the art of Tom Jung, measures a full 27" by 41". The one-sheet will be sent to you rolled, not folded. One-sheets are movie marquee posters and can sometimes be found in memorabilia stores for very high prices. A true collector's item. Members with February 1982 expiration dates, it's time to renew. Your renewal forms have been mailed... Remember, THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

In an effort to answer the eternal question, "How many members are currently in the fan club?" We wish to report the Jedi Intergalactic Census Bureau currently records that we have over 100,000 members in this galaxy alone.

May the Force be with you!

Maureen Garrett, Director



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Principal photography began January 11th on REVENGE OF THE JEDI, the third film of the STAR WARS saga, at EMI Elstree Studios on the outskirts of London.

Once more the STAR WARS saga has taken all nine sound stages at EMI Elstree which was also the studio shooting base for both previous productions.

Practical cost and key technical crew is a mixture of old friends and new faces. Luke Skywalker, Ewoks, Princess Leia, Lando Calrissian, C-3PO, R2-D2, Chewbacca, Yoda, and the dreaded Darth Vader are all back in action as the Rebel Alliance again attempts to outwit and outstrike the dark forces of the Empire.

REVENGE OF THE JEDI is a Chapter III Production, produced by Howard Kazanjian and directed by Richard Marquand. George Lucas is executive producer with Robert Watts and Jim Stoen serving as co-producers.

The film stars Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Billy Dee Williams and Anthony Daniels, with David Prowse, Sami Shire, Peter Mayhew and Frank Oz in co-starring roles.

REVENGE OF THE JEDI will be released by Twentieth Century Fox with a May 27, 1983 opening scheduled in the United States and Canada.

How to write us:

Editorial correspondence, new membership fees, pen pals, actor fan mail, costume guidelines, club information:

Official STAR WARS Fan Club, P.O. Box 2202, San Rafael, CA 94912. When appropriate send a self-addressed stamped envelope to help ensure a quick reply.

Subscription problems, membership renewals, product fulfillment inquiries: Official STAR WARS Fan Club, Customer Service Dept. P.O. Box 163, Mt. Morris, IL 61054.

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

New members will receive the EMPIRE kit, which contains a poster, six 8 x 10 color photos, a decal, and other ESB items, and a year's subscription (four issues) to BANTHA TRACKS.

New membership fees are \$5 (\$6 Canada, \$7 foreign); renewals are \$4.50 (\$5.50 Canada, \$6.50 foreign). Canadian and foreign members must order using international bank drafts or money orders made payable in U.S. currency. Please do not send cash.

FORCE NUMBERS

Your force number can be found on the upper left portion of your mailing label. Please include this Force number at all times when writing the Fan Club.

PEN PAL SERVICE

If you are interested in having a pen pal, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the Fan Club. Please write "Pen Pal" on the outer envelope.

BANTHA TRACKS, the newsletter of the Official STAR WARS Fan Club, is published quarterly by Lucasfilm Ltd., P.O. Box 2202, San Rafael, CA 94912. This is Issue Number 15, February, ©Lucasfilm Ltd. (LFL) 1982. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A. Reprint or reproduction in part or in whole without written permission from the publisher is strictly forbidden.

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San Rafael, CA 94912

Bulk Rate
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